

The Washington Times

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1916.

THE COMMUNITY FORUMS

An event of marked significance to this community takes place this afternoon. It is the Community Forum meeting at the Grover Cleveland School. It may be the forerunner of similar forums all over the city.

There need be no fear that these forums will transgress upon the functions of the citizens' associations which they are held to the purpose of being places for discussion of civic problems. The citizens' associations may act upon the conclusions reached. The forums are to be educational, the citizens' bodies are expressions of community feeling as the result of such education.

Sunday afternoon is a time when all may attend the forum meetings. Membership in the citizens' associations follows joining their membership in the forums follows upon residence in the community where they exist.

The general nature of the forum this afternoon is expressed by the attendance of a Catholic priest, a Hebrew rabbi, and a Protestant clergyman as speakers. Where the churches cannot unite the forums can. They can furnish the bond among creeds and parties, classes and professions, for union in discussing the affairs of any community.

The forum is the first big step toward making the schools of the city community centers in the true sense of that phrase.

AS TO LEARNING TO SPELL

Every time iconoclasm seems to have reached its limit it goes a step farther. Now it is swatting the spelling books used in our schools. Persons who like to criticize schools always harken back to the "Three R's" as the supposed essentials of education, and somewhere among those, it is assumed, spelling is included.

Along come the prying eyes of investigators from the Russell Sage Foundation, and look through business and professional letters of men high in those fields. They took, at random, letters dictated by foremost bankers, railroad men, lawyers, teachers, manufacturers, and merchants. Just 542 words, they found, constituted seven-eighths of those used.

Then a commentator of the Philadelphia Public Ledger, with latent memories of terrific slaughters in the Friday afternoon "spelling bees" of past days, looked through a spelling book now in use in the Philadelphia schools. He found such strange lingual paroxysms as "eclectic," "hermetical," "soporific," "pleonasm," "supercilious," and "deceituous."

All good and useful words, in their places. But a vast majority of the pupils who are made to learn them wish to go forth and become stenographers, or bookkeepers, or to learn a trade, or to become a technical or a scientific expert.

Imagine the panic when the head buyer of our leading department store begins to pour into his bewildered stenographer's ear polysyllables of that sort. We can see her now, adjusting her hat, and breathing forth to a place where she will not be insulted! Imagine the president of your bank, your physician, your grocer, your insurance agent, even your clergymen, indulging in the rhetoric of the "advanced spellers."

When one begins to think about vocational education, and looks about for places to do a bit of pruning, they obtrude themselves in most unexpected places.

THE CASE OF SECRETARY LANE

When Franklin K. Lane was drafted from the Interstate Commerce Commission to the portfolio of the Interior, there was widespread expression of satisfaction. Mr. Lane had proved himself an able public administrator, and he possessed the public confidence in a marked measure.

The Times was not one of those that rejoiced when Mr. Lane was taken away from a great work to which he had devoted many years with signal success. It felt that, on the whole, it were better for him to remain with the Interstate Commission. He was going from one great post, whose duties and requirements he completely understood, to another in which necessarily he would have to be for a time something of a novice. There was no question of his capacity for a highly creditable administration at the Interior; and he has given that administration. He knows, now, his new business as well as he knew that at the commission. Is it necessary that he should be moved away to the War Department and broken in to a new task? Good men are not so scarce that

this kind of thing is necessary. On the other side, good men are so useful that their time ought not to be frittered away in preparing them overlastingly for new tasks. Mr. Lane ought to remain at the Interior.

NEW OUTLAWRY OF THE SEAS

It would appear that the German admiralty was a long time setting its trap for the United States, in the matter of arming merchant ships. The Washington Government has always held to the right to place arms on vessels of commerce as a means of protection, and there are records of a number of notable fights that such vessels have made, in the old days of privateering. In this regard Britain and America stood together, and the intimation that Washington would insist on liners being disarmed was the signal for a beginning of divergence between the maritime rules of the two great powers that on the whole have contributed most, by acting together, toward developing modern regulations in behalf of civilized warfare.

The pirate was the enemy of all mankind, and from time immemorial nations reserved the right to arm their vessels of peace for defense against pirates. In the days of the old buccanneries of the "Spanish main" it would have been folly for a merchant ship to sail the seas without every reasonable means for defending itself. Of course, the conditions of that day were not quite so bad as the von Tirpitz school of twentieth-century navalism has made them; for even in the days of plain, avowed piracy, the quarry was permitted the right to attempt escape, without thereby condemning himself to sure death. Von Tirpitz has merely gone Captain Kidd one better; the merchantman must not try to escape, must not be armed, and must hope for no better fate than to be sunk.

Before the present war started, and before anybody save the plotters in Berlin knew that it was going to be started, the German doctors of international law were laying the foundation for their present doctrine. They had foreseen just the set of conditions that have now arisen; they knew that Germany would have to make its naval war one of marauding with submarines and raiders. They realized that it would be impossible to place prize crews on their prizes, or to take them into German ports; therefore it became necessary for them to get the sea rules warped into acquiescence in the sort of warfare they would have to make.

To this end the German authorities gravely began assuming, several years before the war broke out, that merchant vessels must not be allowed to arm. They wrote the old doctrine out and the new doctrine into their textbooks on maritime law. They were determined to get the nations committed to this new rule if possible; putting it, of course, on the ground of "humanity." In fact, they were planning against the day when their cockleshell submarines would be scurrying the seas, themselves defenseless, and therefore finding their only hope of security in rules of the sea that would make attack on them impossible.

It is to such a doctrine as this that Berlin assumes it has committed the United States. If it be true; if the Washington Government, for the sake of the paltry indemnity that has been promised in the Lusitania case, has been induced to agree that merchantmen may not arm against pirates and submarine super-pirates, then indeed has Germany won a great diplomatic victory. It is inconceivable that our Government has been weak and simple-minded enough to assent to such a monstrous doctrine.

There never was a form of piracy so horrible as the submarines' employment in this war. It is simply the assault of savagery on civilization and peace and all common rights of humanity. If the United States has submitted to the rule that merchantmen must not protect themselves against it, then the United States has surrendered the whole gain that civilization has achieved from the earliest effort to formulate a law of the sea that should preserve any form of common rights on the wide waters.

THE INTERBOROUGH LESSON

It is regrettable that members of Congress are such busy men that of necessity they cannot give time to informing themselves about many things going on around them. It would be a real task for any man, at this distance, to keep intimately in touch with the sensations that are developing day by day in the legislative investigation of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company of New York. Yet it would be well worth while to any man who could find time, and it would equip him to take a leading part in performing a great service to the nation and to the city of Washington.

During the New York inquiry, which is far from its end as yet, it has been discovered that the great traction property has been milked for big and little graft and favors of all kinds. Lawyers, financiers, con-

tractors, politicians, boosters, speculators, have lugged away their slices of the good thing. It runs far into the millions, and the sifting and juggling have been regular features in the development, financing, and operation of the great property.

The city is presumed to have an interest in the Interborough; its credit was loaned to the building. But it now develops that it will be many, many years before the city can hope for any returns on its rights and interests. Public concerns have been forgotten; the men in charge of the business seem to have calculated that they ought to get all they could while the getting was good; sometime, somehow, somebody might interfere and insist on community rights getting a little attention.

This Interborough case recalls the old affair of the Chicago railways; of Boston gas; of privately owned and richly exploited public utilities everywhere. It seems always to be about the same general condition: the public pays, the plunderers profit. Must it go on always?

Here in Washington we have an example of overcapitalized, inadequate street-railway service; of intercorporate juggling worthy of the best talents of the Bay State Gas manipulators; of electric light consumers being overcharged in order to earn dividends on the aerated stocks of a street car company that owns the electric facilities of the town. This condition has been notorious for many years; yet it is allowed to continue in the face of the fact that there is a simple, effective, obvious remedy; a practical, workable, surely applicable remedy.

That remedy is public ownership. But it isn't applied. Why not?

For one reason, because the chairman of the great Congressional committee that would have to formulate a plan for public assumption of the properties, is devoting himself to legislation to fine the seller of gasoline \$1 per gallon for every cent the price shall rise above a fixed upset figure!

Washington ought to own its public utilities, and set an example before the whole country in honest, efficient public conduct of such utilities.

Instead, Washington is as deep in the mire of public utility exploitation even as these recent revelations have shown New York to be.

THE NEW BATTLE IN THE WEST

For several weeks the news has been very plainly implied by the somewhat cryptic dispatches from the Franco-Belgian front, that a great new encounter is going on. Seemingly, the allies have been massing men and material in anticipation of a magnificent spring advance, and the Germans have taken time for the foretop, making their smash first. As a result there have been initiatives on both sides, attacks and counter-attacks, and very little substance of results has been achieved.

One thing, however, has been made more apparent than ever before. It is that the business of smashing through the western line, by either side, in either direction, is one to be accomplished only at a sacrifice of men and munitions well-nigh past belief. The daily news dispatches tell of a few hundred yards of French trenches being taken by the Germans in one section, while a brief space of German outer works have been captured by the French somewhere else. Then a day or two later comes the announcement that each side has recaptured the ground it had lost; but in every case, attack or counter-attack, the losses have been terrific.

It is all easy enough to agree that modern conditions have remade the art of war; it is all but impossible for two fairly matched armies, fighting from trenches in the open country, to fight to a military decision. They must fight on and on till one side or the other is worn out.

When each side is ready, willing, and prepared to offer up its entire human resources in this bootless affair of mere killing without results, it makes war a mere shambles. There can be no victory, no defeat; nothing but killing, killing, killing. The war is a year and a half old, and yet only one great battle of decisive character—that at the Marne—has been fought. That battle saved Paris, France, the cause of the allies. It is certain, now, that the allies will not be crushed, wrecked, ruined. It is equally certain that Germany will not be.

But month after month passes in the horrible bloodletting, and the issue is never brought any closer; rather, it seems farther away now than it did at the beginning.

The usual crop of grave fears to-day. Some morning we're going to wake up and find the country weighted down with frivolous fears, just for a change.

Then, again, one of the advantages of corned beef and cabbage is that you'll find no arsenic in your soup.

Sporting editors want to know if the German foothold is anything like a Gotch toe-hold.

Don't submarine any good relations sending Valentines.

WHAT'S AN PROGRAM IN CAPITAL TODAY

Illustrated lecture, "Columbia River Highway and the Great Coast," by General C. Lane, Home Club, 1115 P. M.
Lecture, "The Panama Canal," by General C. Lane, Home Club, 1115 P. M.
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THIRD APPEAL OF SOCIAL WORKERS OF D. C.

The Joint Finance Committee of the Associated Charities and Citizens' Relief Association finds it necessary to issue this third appeal in behalf of those in sickness, neglect, and impoverishment in the District of Columbia.

These local philanthropies are daily reaching families whom prosperity has not yet relieved from want and suffering. Ten thousand dollars are needed to continue this work without abatement. Receipts to date are 10 per cent in arrears of last year at this time, while relief disbursements for January alone exceeded those for January, 1915, by 30 per cent.

Contributions in any amount will be welcome.

ASSOCIATED CHARITIES,
CUNO H. RUDOLPH,
President.
JOHN JOY EDSON,
Treasurer.

CITIZENS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION,
WILLIAM C. RIVES,
President.
WILLIAM J. FLATHER,
Treasurer.

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE,
MILTON E. ATLES, Chairman.
HOWARD S. REDSIDE, Treasurer.

SOCIAL SERVICE HOUSE,
923 H Street Northwest.

Metric System Gaining Favor of Congress; Due To Expansion of Trade

Legalization of French Weights and Measurements Table Held to Be Necessary to Facilitate Commerce With Latin America—May Become Universal.

By JUDSON C. WELLIVER.

The adoption of the metric system of weights and measures within the near future is foreshadowed by the extensive interest Congress is taking in the subject.

Quite unexpectedly, a new factor has been injected into the consideration. It has been discovered by the laity that the metric system, now the well-nigh universal one, is almost absolutely necessary if this country is to expand its business in Latin-American countries, or, for that matter, almost anywhere else in the world.

BILL PROVIDES FOR CHANGE

Congressman Dillon of South Dakota has introduced a bill which provides that after July 1, 1920, the metric system of weights and measures shall be the sole legal standard in this country; meanwhile it shall be permissible in all transactions. The Bureau of Standards is authorized to promulgate tables of equivalents showing the exact relations between present units and those under the metric system.

Another measure has been introduced, giving the Bureau of Standards power to pass upon the types of weighing apparatus that may be used in this country. This measure has been the subject of hearings, and will pass at the present session unless it gets lost in the jam at the close of the session; it is one measure to which nobody seriously objects, and that everybody recognizes as a good thing, yet that has the greatest difficulty passing simply because there is not enough fight about it to compel attention.

There is some disposition to pass first the measure giving the Bureau of Standards authority over weighing apparatus, and to postpone for a time the metric system bill. It is argued that if the bureau had authority over weighing instruments it could use that authority to familiarize the public with metric units and terms. There is, according to experts in the subject, less doubt in the practicality of adjusting the scales for a number of locomotives for the French government, with the requirement that they be based on the metric units. The company at first doubted the practicability of adjusting its models, paraphernalia, etc., in this system; but it was decided that the thing could be done and was worth doing; the order was taken, and the engines built under the French measures. It has proved a good move, for most of the railroad systems outside this country use machinery constructed on these measures, and American manufacturers are learning that they must adapt themselves to the requirements of the market.

The great advantage of the metric system is that it is based throughout on the scale of ten, while the American-British system is irregular. Under the metric system, ten centimeters make one meter, and so on; while under our system twelve inches make one foot, three feet one yard, five and one-half yards one rod, etc. In making computations, therefore, the American system requires careful multiplications or divisions, while the metric system gets the result by merely adding ciphers or pointing off decimal places. Accuracy, as well as facility, mark the metric system; it naturally goes along with the Arabic system of decimal numeration. Moreover, the United States has adopted the decimal system in its money, and all

money transactions and calculations would be easier if measures were in the corresponding system.

But all this is not the argument that is impressing Congress just now. There was rather languid interest in the metric proposal, as there always has been in the past, until Secretary of Commerce Redfield sent the director of the Bureau of Standards to tell a Congressional committee how important it was to make the change. Then the committee listened eagerly. It was told that this system is obligatory in all lands save Russia, Turkey, and Greece, and that it is legal there. It is the sole system in all Latin-America, and is legal, and fast increasing in popularity, in Japan, China, and almost all other countries. Not to use it is to subject American commerce to a great disadvantage in countries that have it, and that are accustomed to do all their business in its terms. The Department of Commerce, in fact, considers it one of the most important developments possible at this time, as a means of trade extension. A universal language is about the only international trade facility that could be more useful.

The metric system was one of the products of the great intellectual output of the French Revolution, and its period in France. Its inventors believed it destined to become the universal standard, and in little more than a century their expectation was realized. In the Bureau of Standards of the United States, the director stated to the Congressional committee that calculations are made under the metric system; nobody would think of wasting time in the intricate calculations of American tables. After results are reached under the metric computations, they are reduced to terms of feet, pounds, or whatever may be required.

Based on Earth's Surface. The French commission that invented the system was determined to base it on some invariable quantity in nature; and the distance on the earth's surface from equator to pole was decided upon. This was measured and checked repeatedly by scientific processes; and the ten-millionth part of this distance was made the meter. It is now known that this quadrant is not an absolutely fixed value; also that the measurements were not exact. But the arbitrary standards prepared on the basis of these calculations have been accepted everywhere.

One of the greatest difficulties about adopting the metric system in this country has to do with land measurements. All the lands are held on acre unit basis; to reduce this to metric would involve vast difficulties in reorganizing records. As a matter of fact, this difficulty is not so great as imagined. When the United States acquired Texas, California, and other southwestern areas that had been surveyed by the Spanish, the unit of measurement for the land was the Spanish varas, of approximately thirty-three and one-third inches. All these measurements had to be reduced to American units, and it was accompanied with comparatively little trouble.

The present American system is simply a chaos. We have, for instance, a dry and liquid quart; and they do not correspond to the British quart. The British liquid quart is 20 per cent larger than ours, while their standard bushel is 3 per cent less than ours. Necessities of their great foreign trade have compelled the English to use the metric system in that department of their affairs, and they are much more familiar with it than are Americans. Japan has adopted the system, and its own national system is very similar to the metric. There is every reason to believe that the United States' adoption of the standard would be followed by its acceptance in England, which would mean almost literal universality.

TWO CONGRESSMEN AMONG SPEAKERS AT BANQUET OF THE MASON.

ALEXANDRIA, Feb. 14.—Announcement was made today by C. Page Waller, Jr., master of Alexandria-Washington Lodge of Masons, of the speakers who will deliver addresses at the annual banquet of the organization which will be held on Washington's Birthday. They will be Congressman A. P. Gardner of Massachusetts, Congressman Martin A. Morrison of Illinois, Warren S. Seipp, of Maryland, and J. Alston Cabell, grand master of Masons of Virginia. Master Waller will preside.

The banquet will be held in the Elks' Auditorium, and it is expected that 400 guests will be present. Previous to the banquet a stated communication of Alexandria-Washington lodge will be held in the Elks' lodge room.

Among the guests will be the members of the Washington National Masonic Memorial Association. The convention will commence here on February 12. The members of the association and its officers and members of the Alexandria-Washington lodge will make their annual pilgrimage to the tomb of George Washington on the afternoon of February 22.

The February term of the corporation court commenced this morning. This is a busy time, and there are few important matters to come before the court for consideration.

In police court today, Orry Fields, colored, who on January 24 assaulted Samuel Lee, colored, brought before Judge Lee, sentenced to pay a fine of \$50 and serve six months in the city jail by Police Justice Caton, his morning.

Bitter denunciation of the practices of modern society of taking the names of God in vain, of the use of the name of the Holy Name Society were the features of an address delivered last night at the first solemn vesper service of the Holy Name Society of St. Mary's Catholic Church by the Rev. E. P. O'Leary, of St. Dominic's Church, Washington, a member of the Dominican Order of Priests.

Despite the inclement weather, the church was crowded with worshippers, among them a large number of members of the Holy Name Society of Washington. The service was followed by the benediction of the most blessed sacrament.

The following committee in charge of the arrangements: Paul A. Kersey, chairman; Thomas E. Dymon, John A. Ewald, William Deane, William Desmond, Thomas W. Murphy, Sylvester A. Breen, and Francis L. Fannon.

Robert E. Knight, vice president of the Virginia Retail Merchants' Association, and representing the retail merchants of this city, left for Alexandria on a special train. The service was followed by the benediction of the most blessed sacrament.

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